

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

David Malukas

Alexander Rossi

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with the front row. Starting second, great to see Alex Rossi joining us here. On pole for Sunday's race, the points leader in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, the reigning Indy 500 champion, Alex Palou. We'll be joined by David Malukas in a bit.

How are you feeling?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Man, this is probably the most rested I've been going into a 500. I've had other commitments, but much less commitments you would usually have in this week leading up to the race.

No, I feel good. It's obviously been pretty hectic for everyone involved. Lots of things had to line up in the correct way. But feel very fortunate to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Are you ready to go? How important is tomorrow? Obviously getting ready for Sunday?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I feel ready, feel good. I like this new coach.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Quite comfy. I spent a lot of time on couches.

THE MODERATOR: Can you rate this one?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: 8 out of 10.

THE MODERATOR: It also can be yours if the price is right. Well, it's great to see you both back. I know there are a lot of questions.

Q. Alex, what's going on? You came in on crutches. How are you feeling? Are you cleared to race yet?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I am cleared to race. I will have to

be on crutches because it's a non-weight-bearing injury. Fortunately to drive a race car, you don't have to bear weight. Range of motion is good. Pain is minimal. Swelling, as you can see, I fit into my race boot. I'm good to go.

Q. You don't use that foot at all in the car?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You sure do. I guess I used it a little too much on Monday. Was out there getting it (laughter).

Q. What happened Monday?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Actually the opposite of that.

It's a little bit of a weird one. I don't know that there's a specific answer. The Speedway is a punishing place for any sort of -- it minimizes margins, I think. We just were a little bit too far out of that window.

That's the way it goes around here sometimes. Unfortunate obviously to have it happen. In some ways incredibly fortunate that it happened on a Monday after qualifying, where the ultimate true car speed isn't as important. Very fortunate it didn't happen on Carb Day, so the team has had quite a bit of time, unfortunately for them, to rebuild a car from scratch. It's the car I raced last year. It's always been a Speedway car.

As I said, a trying couple of days for everyone involved in the 20 car. Also it will be a very rewarding one if we can accomplish what we think we can on Sunday.

Q. Alex, you'll be out there tomorrow?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes.

Q. You've talked a lot about the ankle. You haven't mentioned the finger. Where is the process on that? That's completely good?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: How does it look?

Q. Which finger is that one?



ALEXANDER ROSSI: I can't show you that one. I'll get in a lot of trouble (smiling). Yeah, we're good. It's the middle finger.

Q. Have you raced through a lower-body injury like this before? If there was a percentage, what would you say it is?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: For when I need to do in a race car, I'm at 99%. Yes, unfortunately I have raced with a broken big toe before.

DAVID MALUKAS: Which foot was it?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Today.

DAVID MALUKAS: The first one you hurt.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The right one.

DAVID MALUKAS: The left one, you're sweet.

Q. Alexander, it's good that you're okay. The car, anytime you switch setups from one car to the next, is there a concern when you go out that it might not quite be exactly the same?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. As I said, this is the car that we've used here at the Speedway many times before. All through this month, we switch race running to qual sims, that requires a whole myriad of changes. If this was all new components, a different chassis, all that sort of thing, maybe you'd start to question it a little bit.

This was truly going to be our race car until some other things shifted. This was built all off-season in preparation for this month to be my race car anyways.

Q. Last week Dallara won the award for that flap that came up. When your car pitched, did it engage that flap?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I wasn't looking at that (smiling).

Q. It has to be an important thing for you.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I would assume so. I can tell you, I don't know if I'm allowed to talk about the values of the two impacts, but they were very high, and the fact that we're here having this conversation and joking about a sore ankle is pretty amazing.

Q. Alex Palou, good to see you.

ALEX PALOU: Thank you.

Q. Alexander, can you share on a scale of 1 to 10 the level of pain you anticipate to be racing with?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: If we do our jobs correctly, close to zero.

Q. No painkiller shot you have to worry about for the ankle?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I didn't say that. I said if we do our jobs correctly, close to zero.

DAVID MALUKAS: He's so funny (laughter).

Q. Alexander, what did you have to do to be cleared? Did you just have to slow you could get in and out of the car, weight on the pedals?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I had to drive in a sim. Get in and out of the car in an appropriate amount of time. I had to show that I could react to instances quick enough with my right foot in the race car with the pedal and my boot on. That was done over several increments and durations with all of the stuff that will be on me.

As thorough as you can be without actually being on the racetrack.

Q. Will you race with a specially made boot?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: There will be a brace of sorts that's still kind of being finalized. There's a lot of different things to consider, from a size standpoint, you got to preserve the function of being able to do that on the pedals, you have to ensure it's providing stability, fire resistant. There's a lot of caveats, as David unfortunately also knows.

It's been an incredible team effort from no less than 12 people in order to make this happen.

Q. Did you have the procedure on your ankle in order to be able to race? If you weren't racing, would you not have surgery and it would have been just healed?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Both injuries were, yes, a situation where even in order to consider driving, they had to stabilize it.

Q. David, with this being your first front-row start, has there been any discussion about how you're going to take the start with the team, or is it we're just going to go for it?

DAVID MALUKAS: No, just going into it like I do any race. Just watch previous race starts from that position, just getting a collection of data to see where people funnel out, funnel in. Just go with the flow.

Q. Alexander, the outpouring of support from people in the racing world, how good did that feel?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it's incredible. This is an incredibly close community. I got texts immediately from both these guys next to me. We all understand the magnitude of what we're doing out there. I don't think it's lost on anyone how you're not guaranteed anything in this sport.

Very, very appreciative for all of the nice messages. Yeah, just hope we can make everyone proud here in a couple days.

Q. When Tim walked into the medical center, were you giving him a hard time or was it good?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He never got to me. He never got to me. They don't let him that far.

Q. Alexander, can you talk a bit about the psychology of almost coming to terms with almost the inevitability of crashing around this place, what your relationship is with kind of fear or the lack of it?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, unfortunately I've crashed twice here. Both times have been turn two. For whatever reason... Alex, that's where you crashed?

ALEX PALOU: Yes. Thanks for reminding me.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I recovered from that. I don't see this being any different. We crash race cars. That's part of the job description. Been doing it my whole career, so... Doesn't really change this week.

Q. You talk about having to do that procedure to make yourself able to race. Did you ever consider after the accident not doing that and not racing?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, absolutely not, no.

Q. Alex Palou...

THE MODERATOR: There's one (laughter).

Q. Coming back here as the defending winner, has it felt different at all? What would a back-to-back mean to you? Any weight off your shoulders already having done it once?

ALEX PALOU: Not really. Like, we always have that pressure to win. That's why they pay us, they pay us to win. Not to win once and that's it. They pay us to do it continuously.

Yeah, I know I'm hungrier than ever just because I know what comes with it, once you win the Indy 500 and what it means. I don't feel more or less pressure. Not because I won once, it's not like now I need another one. It's more the opposite, it's more like I want to go back to back.

I know we have everything. We have a really, really fast car. Hopefully we can have a good race and get there to the end.

Q. David, you're up in the front row. Are your teammates picking on you? Giving you good advice for the start?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, no, I don't think they're picking on me. No, I mean, we just had normal conversations like we've always had. Just ran through debriefs.

For a 500, you can win this race from whatever position truly. It makes it easier the higher up you are, but you can win it from anywhere, yeah.

Q. I'm blind. Today is Global Accessibility Awareness Day. What was your psychology on track? You have coms in your ears, telling you what to do. What is your instinct first? Getting feedback from the road or is it to rely on the team to let your spotters and let everyone else know what you got to do next?

DAVID MALUKAS: Can you repeat the question?

Q. When you're out in the field, what is the sensation or feeling of you're hearing your coms, everything else, you're hearing the road. Me being blind, I want to understand how do you feel when you're in the vehicle and what is the piece of information psychologically? Is it you are shutting everything else out and focusing on how the car feels and sounds if something is about to slip on the car, is it a feeling of the car that something is cutting loose, or is it that you rely on your spotters to say you have a flat tire?

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, it all comes down to driver feel. For us a lot of it comes through the engine and what you can feel through the seat. All our seats are custom made for us. We get a lot of that feeling how the rear end is moving to the front end.

Obviously spotters are here to tell us about cars around us.

When it comes to actually cars around us, what the car needs, if it's broke, that comes down to car feeling, what we feel through our body and what the car is telling us.

Q. Alexander, you seem to want to talk more about turn two in your podcast the other day. Seen a lot of cars snap loose at that same spot. Can you elaborate more about that spot, turn two.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's tricky because I think it's not shaded, so it's always kind of in the sun. I guess I do know.

Turn one and turn three, even though they're higher speeds, you have the whole straight to kind of cool the tire down. Turn four is usually protected from wind, for the most part. There's certain directions there's not, but for the most part it is. It stays cool.

The tire saturation effect that you get in turns one and three, it just has a bigger impact in turn two because the conditions there are usually the worst. The tire is kind of already at its limit from going through turn one, then turn two is a hard corner from conditions.

Turn four the tire is also at its limit, but the conditions are easier, so it's just less traumatic.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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